

A City's Evolution, by Roger Brown.

America's New City

Something new is appearing on the American landscape. Architects, planners, and others have given it a variety of names—spread city, slurb, exurb, edge city, sprawl. The profusion of vaguely ominous names is only one sign of our deep uncertainty about what this new thing is. Is it merely the old suburb swollen beyond all proportion? Or are we seeing the distinction between city and suburb gradually being erased? Historian Robert Fishman believes that a “new city,” utterly without precedent, is arising. If its opportunities are recognized, he argues, Americans’ long quest to combine the amenities of technological civilization with the pleasures of natural surroundings may at last be rewarded. If they are not, the failure will blight the landscape of America—and the lives of Americans—for generations to come.

MEGALOPOLIS UNBOUND

by Robert Fishman

Jim and Delores Bach live in a redwood contemporary in West Nyack, N.Y., about 25 miles north of Manhattan. Twenty years ago, their cul de sac was an apple orchard, and today two gnarled old trees on the front lawn still hold up their fruit to the early autumn sun.

This morning, two of the Bach children will board buses to school and Delores will drive young Alex to a day-care center in nearby Nanuet. Then she will drive 20 minutes down the Garden State Parkway to her job at a medical laboratory in Montvale, N.J. Her husband, meanwhile, will be on the New York State Thruway, headed east over the Hudson River on the Tappan Zee Bridge to his job with IBM in Westchester County.

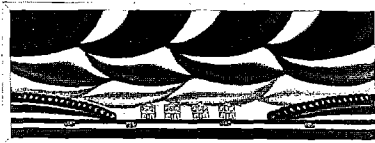
A decade ago, Delores Bach could not have imagined finding such a good job so close to home. She stayed home with the children and Jim commuted to midtown Manhattan. But since the 1970s, northern

New Jersey and New York’s Westchester County—the very county whose genteel “bedroom communities” the writer John Cheever lived in and wrote about for the *New Yorker*—have become carpeted with office complexes and stores. West Nyack and other towns in Rockland County have filled up with families who can’t afford Westchester’s stratospheric home prices. Others are moving even farther to the northwest, to Orange County. Now, the Tappan Zee, built as part of the interstate highway system 35 years ago to link New York City with Albany and other distant upstate areas, is jammed every rush hour. In fact, Jim Bach’s trip will take about an hour, longer than his old 50-minute commute by express bus to Manhattan.

The Bachs still make it a point to get to Manhattan once every six months or so for a day at the museum with the kids or a night out at the theater. They still subscribe to the *New York Times*. But they have friends who have not been to “the City,” as

it is called, in 10 years. Why bother? They can get good jobs nearby, buy anything they could possibly desire at one of a dozen convenient malls, attend a college, get fine medical care or legal advice—virtually anything they could want is within a one-hour radius. All they have to do is get in the car and drive.

The Bachs are fictional, but West Nyack is a real place—one of literally hundreds of former suburbs around the nation which, without anybody quite realizing it, have detached themselves from the big city and coalesced into “new cities.” They lack skyscrapers, subways, and other symbolic structures of the central city, but they have acquired almost all of its functions.



“The big city,” Frank Lloyd Wright announced prophetically in 1923, “is no longer modern.” Although his forecast of a new age of urban decentralization was ignored by his contemporaries, we can now see that Wright and a few other thinkers of his day understood the fragility of the great behemoth—the centralized industrial metropolis—which then seemed to embody and define the modernity of the 20th century.

These capital cities of America’s industrial revolution, with New York and Chicago at their head, were built to last. Their very form, as captured during the 1920s in the famous diagrams by Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess of the Chicago School of sociology, seemed to possess a logic that

was permanent. At the core was the “central business district,” with its skyscraper symbols of local wealth, power, and sophistication; surrounding the core was the factory zone, the dense region of reinforced concrete factories and crowded workers’ housing; and finally, a small ring of affluent middle-class suburbs occupied the outskirts. These were the triumphant American cities, electric with opportunity and excitement, and as late as the 1920s they were steadily draining the countryside of its population.

But modernism is a process of constant upheaval and self-destruction. Just when the centralized metropolis was at its zenith, powerful social and economic forces were combining to create an irresistible movement toward decentralization, tearing asunder the logic that had sustained the big city and distributing its prized functions over whole regions. The urban history of the last half-century is a record of this process.

Superficially, the process might be called “the rise of the suburb.” The term “suburb,” however, inevitably suggests the affluent and restricted “bedroom communities” that first took shape around the turn of the century in New York’s Scarsdale, the North Shore of Chicago, and other locales on the edge of the 19th-century metropolis. These genteel retreats from urban life established the model of the single-family house on its own landscaped grounds as the ideal middle-class residence, just as they established the roles of commuter and housewife as social models for upper-middle-class men and women. But Scarsdale and its kind were limited zones of privilege that strictly banned almost all industry and commerce and excluded not only the working class but even the majority of the

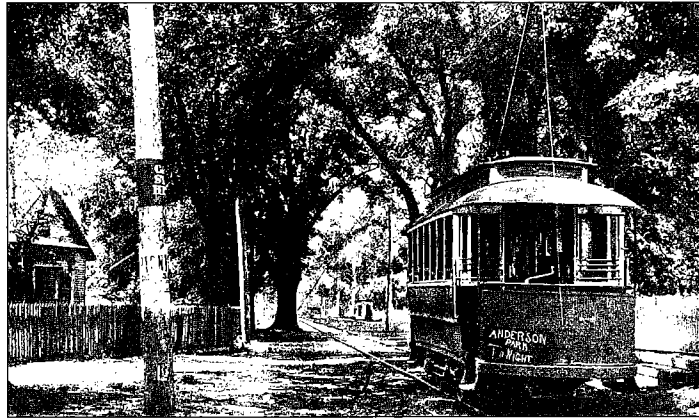
Robert Fishman, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is professor of history at Rutgers University, Camden. Born in Newark, N.J., he received a B.A. from Stanford (1968) and a Ph.D. from Harvard (1974). He is the author of Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century (1977) and Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia (1987).

less-affluent middle class. The traditional suburb therefore remained an elite enclave, completely dependent on the central city for jobs and essential services.

Since 1945, however, the relationship between the urban core and the suburban periphery has undergone a startling transformation—especially during the past two decades. Where suburbia was once an exclusive refuge for a small elite, U.S. Census figures show that 45 percent of the American population is now “suburban,” up from only 23 percent in 1950. Allowing for anomalies in the Census Bureau’s methods, it is almost certain that a majority of Americans live in the suburbs. About one third remain in the central cities. Even more dramatic has been the exodus of commerce and industry from the cities. By 1980, 38 percent of the nation’s workers commuted to their jobs from suburb-to-suburb, while only half as many made the stereotypical suburb-to-city trek.

Manufacturing has led the charge from the cities; the industrial park, as it is so bucolically dubbed, has displaced the old urban factory district as the headquarters of American manufacturing. Commerce has also joined the exodus. Where suburbanites once had little choice but to travel to downtown stores for most of their clothing and household goods, suburban shopping malls and stores now ring up the majority of the nation’s retail sales.

During the last two decades, the urban peripheries have even outpaced the cores in that last bastion of downtown economic clout, office employment. More than 57 percent of the nation’s office space is now located outside the central cities. And the landscaped office parks and research cen-



A fateful choice: Before the triumph of “automobility” a half-century ago, it was possible to travel hundreds of miles, well into the countryside, on trolleys such as this one in Moss Point, Miss.

ters that dot the outlying highways and interstates have become the home of the most advanced high-technology laboratories and factories, the national centers of business creativity and growth. *Inc.* magazine, which tracks the nation’s emerging industries, reported in a survey earlier this year that “growth is in the ‘edge cities.’” Topping its list of “hot spots” were such unlikely locales as Manchester-Nashua, New Hampshire; West Palm Beach, Florida; and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina.

The complex economy of the former suburbs has now reached a critical mass, as specialized service enterprises of every kind, from hospitals equipped with the latest CAT scanners to gourmet restaurants to corporate law firms, have established themselves on the fringes. In all of these ways, the peripheries have replaced the urban cores as the heartlands of our civilization. These multi-functional late-20th-century “suburbs” can no longer be comprehended in the terms of the old bedroom communities. They have become a new kind of city.

The “new city of the 20th century” is not some fantastic city of towers out of Fritz Lang’s celluloid *Metropolis* (1926) or the visionary architect Paoli

Soleri's honeycombed Arcology. (Soleri's plan for a new city in the Arizona desert captivated futurists during the 1960s; the stunted model city that resulted is now a bizarre tourist attraction.) It is, rather, the familiar decentralized world of highways and tract houses, shopping malls, and office parks that Americans have built for themselves since 1945. As exemplified by such areas as the Silicon Valley in northern California, Route 128 outside Boston, the Route One corridor between Princeton and New Brunswick, New Jersey, Du Page County west of Chicago, the Route 285 area north of Atlanta, the northern Virginia district that surrounds Tysons Corner, or the immense region that stretches along the southern California coast from Los Angeles to San Diego, the new city includes the most dynamic elements in our national economy. It flourishes in the rocky soil of New Hampshire, the broad prairies beyond Minneapolis, the rainy shores of Puget Sound and the desert outside Tucson. From coast to coast, the symbol of this new city is not the jagged skyscraper skyline of the 1920s metropolis but the network of super-highways as seen from the air, crowded in all directions, uniting a whole region into a vast super-city.

Familiar as we all are with the features of the new city, most of us do not recognize how radically it departs from the cities of old. The most obvious difference is scale. The basic unit of the new city is not the street measured in blocks but the "growth corridor" stretching 50 to 100 miles. Where the leading metropolises of the early 20th century—New York, London, or Berlin—covered perhaps 100 square miles, the new city routinely encompasses two to three *thousand* square miles. Within such "urban regions," each element is correspondingly enlarged. "Planned unit developments" of cluster-

housing are as large as townships; office parks are set amid hundreds of acres of landscaped grounds; and malls dwarf some of the downtowns they have replaced.

These massive units, moreover, are arrayed along the beltways and "growth corridors" in seemingly random order, without the strict distinctions between residential, commercial, and industrial zones that shaped the old city. A subdivision of \$300,000 single-family houses outside Denver may sit next to a telecommunications research-and-production complex, and a new mall filled with boutiques once found only on the great shopping streets of Europe may—and indeed *does*—rise amid Midwestern corn fields.

The new city, furthermore, lacks what gave shape and meaning to every urban form of the past: a dominant single core and definable boundaries. At most, it contains a multitude of partial centers, or "edge cities," more-or-less unified clusters of malls, office developments, and entertainment complexes that rise where major highways cross or converge. As *Washington Post* writer Joel Garreau has observed, Tysons Corner, perhaps the largest American edge city, boasts more office space than downtown Miami, yet it remains only one of 13 edge cities—including Rockville-Gaithersburg, Maryland, and Rosslyn-Balston, Virginia—in the Washington, D.C. region.

Even some old downtowns have been reduced to "first among equals" among the edge cities of their regions. Atlanta has one of the most rapidly growing downtowns in the country. Yet between 1978 and 1983—the years of its accelerated growth—the downtown's share of regional office space shrank from 34 percent to 26 percent. Midtown Manhattan is the greatest of all American downtowns, but northern New Jersey now has more office space.

If no one can find the center of the new

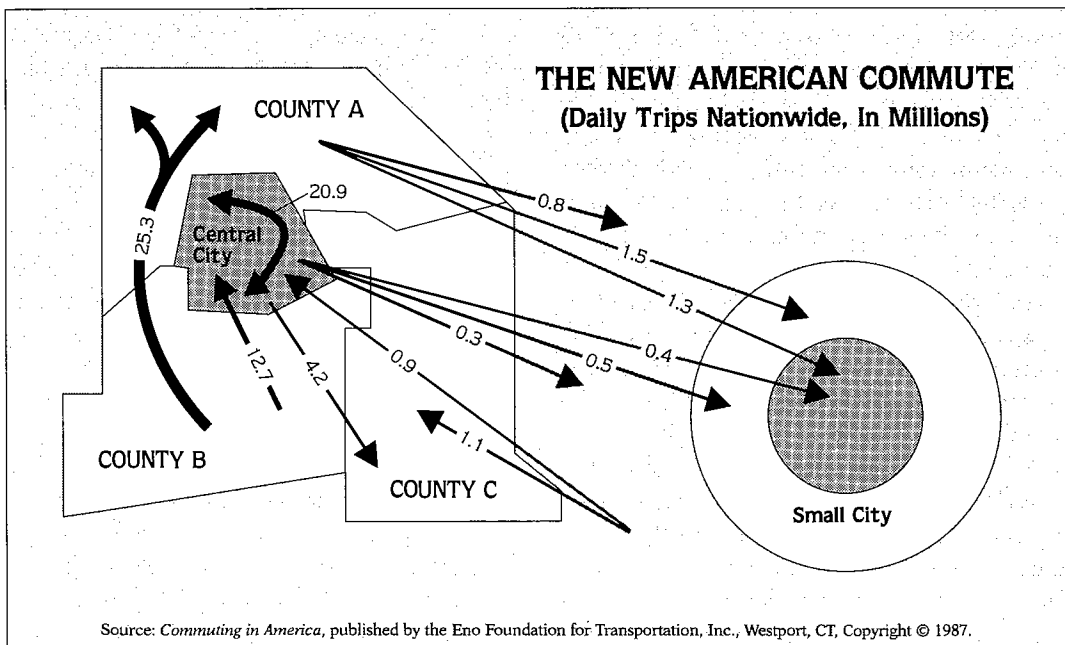
city, its borders are even more elusive.

Low-density development tends to gain an inevitable momentum, as each extension of a region's housing and economy into previously rural areas becomes the base for further expansion. When one successful area begins to fill up, land values and taxes rise explosively, pushing the less affluent even farther out. During the past two decades, as Manhattan's "back offices" moved 30 miles west into northern New Jersey along interstates 78 and 80, new subdivisions and town-house communities began sprouting 40 miles farther west along these growth corridors in the Pocono Mountains of eastern Pennsylvania. "By the time we left [New Jersey]," one new resident of eastern Pennsylvania told the *New York Times*, "there were handyman specials for \$150,000 you wouldn't put your dog in." Now such formerly depressed and relatively inexpensive areas as Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley are gaining population, attracting high-tech industries and office

employment, and thus stimulating further dispersion.

Baltimore and Washington, D.C., once separated by mile after mile of farms and forests, are now joined by an agglomeration of office parks, shopping strips, and housing. Census Bureau officials have given up attempting to draw a statistical boundary between the two metropolitan areas and have proposed combining them into a single consolidated region for statistical purposes. Indeed, as the automobile gives rise to a complex pattern of multi-directional travel that largely by-passes the old central cities, the very concept of "center" and "periphery" becomes obsolete.

Although a few prophets like Wright foresaw the downfall of the old city, no one imagined the form of the new. Instead, it was built up piecemeal, as a result of millions of uncoordinated decisions made by housing developers, shopping-mall operators, corporate executives,



The diagram represents a day in the life of America's commuters in 1980. Suburb-to-suburb commuting is growing rapidly; it accounts for twice as many trips as suburb-to-city travel.

highway engineers and, not least, the millions of Americans who saved and sacrificed to buy single-family homes in the expanding suburbs. The new city's construction has been so rapid and so unforeseen that we lack even a commonly-accepted name for what we have created. Or, rather, we have too many names: exurb, spread city, urban village, megalopolis, outtown, sprawl, slurb, the burbs, nonplace urban field, polynucleated city, and (my own coinage) technoburb.

Not urban, not rural, not suburban, but possessing elements of all three, the new city eludes all the conventional terminology of the urban planner and the historian. Yet it is too important to be left in conceptual limbo. The success or failure of the new city will affect the quality of life of the majority of Americans well into the 21st century. In a few scattered locales today, one can discern the promise of a decentralized city that fulfills its residents' basic hopes for comfortable homes in sylvan settings with easy access to good schools, good jobs, and recreational facilities of many kinds. More ambitiously, one might hope for a decentralized civilization that finally overcomes the old antithesis of city and countryside, that fulfills in daily life the profound cultural need for an environment that combines the machine and nature in a new unity.

But the dangers of the new city are perhaps more obvious than the promise. The immense speed and scale of development across the nation threaten to annihilate the natural environment of entire regions, leaving the tranquility and natural beauty that Americans seek in the new city perpetually retreating another 10 exits down the interstate. The movement of urban functions to an environment never designed for them has produced the anomaly of urban-style crowding and congestion in a decentralized setting. Through greed and ignorance we

could destroy the very things that inspired the new city and build instead a degenerate urban form that is too congested to be efficient, too chaotic to be beautiful, and too dispersed to possess the diversity and vitality of a great city.

The new city is still under construction. Like all new urban types, its early form is necessarily raw and chaotic. The real test of the new city as a carrier of civilization will come when the first flush of hectic building slows down and efforts to redesign and reconstruct begin, as they have in the old downtowns today. But before we can improve the new urban world we are building we need to understand it.



Perhaps the best way to grasp the innovations of the new city is to contrast it with the older metropolis. Lewis Mumford (b. 1895), 20th-century America's greatest urbanist and one of our most clear-sighted prophets of decentralization, expressed this contrast succinctly in his classic work of 1938, *The Culture of Cities*. There he defined "the metropolis of old" as "a single center" that becomes "the focal point of all regional advantages." In the new decentralized city, however, "the whole region becomes open for settlement."

The centralized industrial metropolis that flourished during the 19th and early 20th centuries was the last in a series of urban forms that go back ultimately to Ur and Babylon in the ancient Middle East. At its heart, the traditional city was an attempt to solve the problem of slow and expensive transportation by concentrating people and resources at a single point. Occasionally, this meant locating the city where trade

routes crossed or local markets could be established. More often it favored riverside and seaside locations that lent themselves to the construction of a port.

The coming of the railroads during the 19th century amplified the natural advantages of cities like New York and Chicago and transformed them into national centers. Toward the end of the century, as major trunk rail lines were supplemented by similarly converging networks of streetcar and subway lines, the characteristic pattern of the great metropolis emerged: a city formed by its transportation system into a centralized pattern of a hub and spokes. As Mumford argued, such a pattern necessarily concentrated "regional advantages" at

the hub and placed all other locations in the region at a disadvantage. A familiar urban ecology emerged, composed of concentric rings with the central business district at the core, the factory zone, and then the suburban ring.

Moralists regarded these crowded "monster metropolises" with horror, but concentration worked. The clustering of office buildings in a central business district multiplied the opportunities for face-to-face communication and the exchange of vital information, opportunities which gave the big-city businessman a significant advantage over his small-town counterparts. Similarly, the subways and trolleys that delivered people from around the region to a

WHY PLANNING MATTERS

The shape of the city not only reflects its citizens' values and preferences, Lewis Mumford wrote in The City in History (1961), it also helps form them.

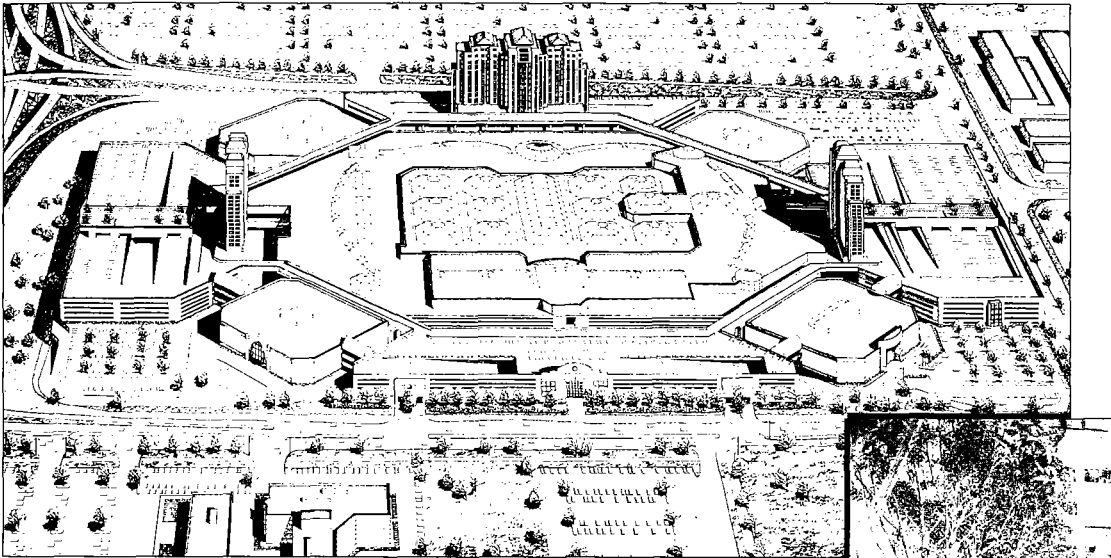
When cities were first founded, an old Egyptian scribe tells us, the mission of the founder was to "put the gods in their shrines." The task of the coming city is not essentially different: its mission is to put the highest concerns of man at the center of all his activities: to unite the scattered fragments of the human personality, turning artificially dismembered men—bureaucrats, specialists, 'experts,' depersonalized agents—into complete human beings, repairing the damage that has been done by vocational separation, by tribalisms and nationalisms, by the absence of organic partnerships and ideal purposes.



Before modern man can gain control over the forces that now threaten his very existence, he must resume possession of himself.

This sets the chief mission for the city of the future: that of creating a visible regional and civic structure, designed to make man at home with his deeper self and his larger world, attached to images of human nurture and love.

We must now conceive the city, accordingly, not primarily as a place of business or government, but as an essential organ for expressing and actualizing the new human personality—that of 'One World Man.' The old separation of man and nature, of townsman and countryman, of Greek and barbarian, of citizen and foreigner, can no longer be maintained: for communication, the entire planet is becoming a village; and as a result, the smallest neighborhood or precinct must be planned as a working model of the larger world. Now it is not the will of a single deified ruler, but the individual and corporate will of its citizens, aiming at self-knowledge, self-government, and self-actualization, that must be embodied in the city. Not industry but education will be the center of their activities; and every process and function will be evaluated and approved just to the extent that it furthers human development, whilst the city itself provides a vivid theater for the spontaneous encounters and challenges and embraces of daily life.



Marx and Engels once described the nuclear family as the cash nexus of capitalism. But that was before the birth of the shopping mall. Since the creation of the first fully enclosed mall in Edina, Illinois, in 1956, these gaudy temples of commerce have become social and business hubs of the new cities. Surveys show that the average American now visits a shopping mall once a week, more often than he attends church. The nation's 1,600 malls, along with its strip shopping centers, account for 54 percent (\$627 billion) of the nation's retail sales. Shown above is the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, which will be the nation's largest mall when it opens in 1992. In addition to the usual array of shops and department stores, its 96 acres of floor space will host a variety of amusements, including a seven-acre Camp Snoopy theme park under glass. The contemporary mall may be a demented hybrid of the bazaar, the circus, and the television game show, but it has also become (inset) the center of entertainment and community life in many new cities where no downtown has ever existed. Senior citizens gather in them, families stroll through them, and, under the watchful eyes of security guards, adolescents cavort in them.

single downtown created the dense mass of patrons that made possible such urban institutions as department stores, vaudeville houses, movie palaces and concert halls, museums, sports stadiums, and big-city newspapers.

The complex tangles of branch rail lines that served the factory zone gave enterprises located there a significant advantage over those anywhere else in the region. The factory zone was also the home of a large skilled and unskilled workforce which only those enterprises within the zone could tap. By the 1890s it thus became the natural environment for all manufacturing firms at-

tempting to become national enterprises.

Perhaps the group best served by metropolitan concentration was the middle-class suburban elite, for they enjoyed all the economic benefits of the great city while living in a quiet, leafy-green, smoke-free environment at its edge.

By the 1920s the centralized industrial city had reached its zenith; at the time, only a few lonely prophets noticed that a series of separate and uncoordinated technological innovations were converging to undermine the special advantages of the central city. As Mumford suggested, these innovations all had in common the replacement

of networks of communication that focused advantages on the core with networks that distributed them equally over a region.

The great model of such a network was the road system. Although early highway engineers attempted to design major roads on the hub-and-spokes model of the railroads, automobile owners soon discovered that the radical innovation of the roads was to open up to settlement areas remote from rail lines. In a rail-dominated metropolis, most people in cities or suburbs lived no farther than a 15-minute walk from a train or trolley stop; with an automobile, people found that they could fill in the empty spaces between the spokes of the regional rail system without condemning themselves to a kind of exile.

The effect of trucking on industrial location was nearly as dramatic. First used extensively during the 1920s, trucks made it possible for factory owners to leave the crowded streets of the industrial zone for cheaper land on the periphery without sacrificing timely pickups and deliveries from other firms that remained in the city.

Not surprisingly, it was in Los Angeles that these possibilities were first recognized. As late as 1925 Los Angeles was a relatively centralized city organized around a lively and prosperous downtown served by a highly-efficient system of public transportation. The big red streetcars of the Pacific Electric system traveled over more than 1,000 miles of track connecting the downtown to even the most remote parts of what was then a vast region of farms and citrus groves. But when downtown traffic reached intolerable levels during the mid-1920s the city was presented with two opposing visions of its future: expand public transportation, or, as the Automobile Club of Southern California proposed, create a massive new grid of roads.

In the debate among the city's civic and business leaders, the issue was put with sur-

prising clarity. Improving public transportation would save the downtown, but it would limit residential development to the narrow rail corridors of the Pacific Electric System. Los Angeles would thus come to resemble eastern cities of the time, with most people living in multi-family dwellings close to public transportation. A new road system, by contrast, might doom the downtown but it would put virtually every acre of land in the 900 square miles of the Los Angeles region within a few blocks of a major road. That would open the whole region to low-density settlement.

Since many of the Los Angeles elite were heavily involved in real-estate speculation, it was never much of a contest. Without hesitation, they chose to sacrifice the downtown and persuaded the citizenry to go along. "Business is pointing the way out of the intolerable congestion situation in our downtown areas," the influential Los Angeles City Club declared in a 1926 report. "Branch banks are going out to the people, factories are seeking outside locations... and some of our retail merchants are building, or have established branch stores in outlying sections." In a referendum that year, voters overwhelmingly approved a massive bond issue for new road construction and rejected a modest proposal to improve the streetcar system.

By the mid-1930s, both the Los Angeles downtown and the public transportation system that sustained it were already deteriorating, as the city established what was then a unique pattern of settlement. The downtown was supplanted by many smaller automobile-based centers like the "Miracle Mile" along Wilshire Boulevard (built, like most of the city's other major streets, with funds from the 1926 bond issue), while the movie studios, the new aircraft factories, and other industry scattered throughout the region. Los Ange-

DISPATCHES FROM THE NEW CITY

Howard County, Md.—Ah, springtime in exurbia! Newcomers may detect it in that first whiff of honeysuckle or mesquite barbecue smoke, wafting over from the neighbor's yard.

But in western Howard County, where working farms still exist amid the three-acre "farmettes" and upscale subdivisions, there remains an earthier harbinger of the season: the first withering blast from a freshly manured field.

"It's country perfume," cracked Todd Taylor, a local lawyer and county resident.

But the new folks don't always see it that way. Last year, neighbors from the new subdivision down the road panicked when a dairy farmer scooped out his winter accumulation of cow manure—an annual ritual—and spread it on a field.

"They called the police department, the Howard County Health Department, and the EPA," recalled William F. Kirkwood III, president of the Howard County Farm Bureau.

"They wanted to know what was that terrible smell."

—*The Washington Post*
(April 5, 1989)

Raritan Township, N.J.—The drastic re-making of this old farm town has changed what it means to be a volunteer.

In 1957, the volunteers built the township's first fire truck, scrounging parts from junk. The chassis came from an old oil tanker, the water pump was donated and the engine was pulled from a wrecked Mercury. Art Lentini, a mechanic, John Carberry, a lawyer, and Bill Worthington, a farmer, organized everybody. Cleaning all the parts, welding them together and then painting the rig took a year.

But now that inspired country camaraderie has vanished along with most of the dairy and egg farmers who gave Raritan Township its identity for decades.

Volunteerism today, such as it is, is represented by a trickle of new residents willing to join town boards. In 1987, 13 people offered to serve out of about 15,000 residents. Most come

to government with either a gripe or a wish-list as the rural community is reshaped into a white-collar suburb in the hills 60 miles west of Manhattan . . .

No newcomers, though, are joining the fire department, once Raritan's social hub, or the rescue squad. Volunteers are their lifeblood, but as in suburbs everywhere, their membership is stagnant.

—*The New York Times* (Jan. 4, 1988)

Gwinnett County, Ga.—Many of the county's schools look like trailer parks, with mobile homes serving as makeshift classrooms alongside school buildings. New children arrive in Gwinnett at the rate of 90 each Monday. The county says it needs to build a new classroom every Monday, Wednesday and Friday just to

keep from getting any further behind . . .

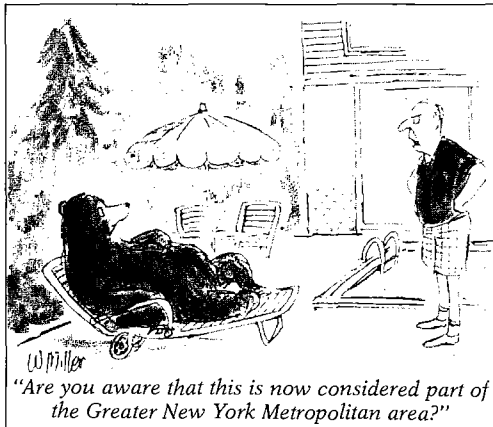
The Five Forks Middle School assigns old-timers as buddies to the newcomers to counsel them to smile a lot and make eye contact. Counselors are ever-watchful. "It is very important that they have a sense of place," says Greg Brigman. "We are trying to make each student's world smaller so the kids have [an] anchor—a group to go around in orbit with."

Meanwhile the school is searching for its own comfortable orbit. Its principal, Michael O'Neal, has posted welcome signs at the perimeter of his school's territory in hopes of drumming up some sense of community identity that might, in turn, promote community support for the school.

—*The Wall Street Journal*
(March 26 & 27, 1987)

Los Angeles, Cal.—Already, mountains more than 60 miles from the city's center are being leveled to build thousands of new houses to make greater Los Angeles even bigger. And futurists expect that Los Angeles, the symbol of urban sprawl, will become denser, stacked atop itself.

—*The Wall Street Journal* (June 12, 1989)



(W) Miller
"Are you aware that this is now considered part of the Greater New York Metropolitan area?"

les thus established an alternate, decentralized form for the American city based on the automobile and the single-family house.

As Los Angeles demonstrated, transportation was the crucial innovation. But roads and autos could not have achieved their full revolutionary impact without the creation of several other important new networks of decentralization: electricity, telecommunications, mass-market retailing, and new modes of corporate management.

Consider electricity. Until the coming of "giant power" (i.e. regional electricity networks) during the 1920s, utility service rarely extended beyond the metropolis. Thereafter, far-flung homeowners and industry enjoyed the same access to reliable electrical power as those at the core.

The telephone network was the harbinger of the great series of inventions—radio, television, computers, fax machines—that increasingly substituted electronic for face-to-face communication, thus reducing the need for meetings and informal contacts downtown.

The 1920s also saw the fruition of new techniques of mass production, which flooded the nation with consumer goods. This new plenty created the possibility of multiplying the number of retail outlets, thus breaking the monopoly of the great downtown stores. No longer would suburbanites have to go "downtown" to enjoy a wide selection of goods.

Meanwhile, corporate managers had developed techniques (and bureaucracies) that allowed them to supervise a variety of plants at one time, all of them from a great distance. Factories were freed to locate far from the cities, where land and labor were cheaper.

These new networks undermined the functional underpinnings of metropolitan centralization. But the new city might have emerged slowly and partially if it had not found an unexpected ally: the American

government.

In Europe, governments fearful of losing precious farm land to the encroaching cities have severely restricted decentralization wherever they could. As early as 1938 the British government prohibited London and the other large British cities from expanding beyond their existing boundaries. A decade later it created permanent "greenbelts" of farm and park land around the cities, including an impressive five-mile wide Metropolitan Greenbelt which still rings London. (Paris, on the other hand, is ringed by a Red Belt, so called because its working-class residents consistently vote Communist. This reflects another unique quality of European development: The affluent middle class generally prefers urban to suburban living.) In the United States, however, Washington, as well as state and local governments, indefatigably promoted expansion. Government "planning" was largely unconscious and unintended, but that did not lessen its effects. Between 1930 and 1960, state intervention in four different arenas profoundly affected the shape of the nation's cities:

- *Housing.* Although the American preference for single-family suburban houses was well-established by the 1920s, it took the New Deal's Federal Housing Administration (1934) to reform the nation's rickety system of mortgage finance and, ultimately, put the American dream house within reach of millions of citizens. As historian Kenneth Jackson has shown, FHA regulations also funneled mortgage money to newly built suburbs, considered good credit risks, while virtually starving the cities of residential construction loans.

- *Defense Industries.* During World War II, the new factories built to manufacture synthetics, alloys, aircraft, and other products under the auspices of the Defense Plants Corporation were rarely located in the central cities. For example, Nassau

County, Long Island, future site of the archetypal postwar suburb of Levittown, became the East Coast's center for aircraft production during the war, as Grumman, Republic, and other manufacturers opened plants there. Unlike the old urban factories, they were built on a single level on great tracts of land, in accordance with new ideas of industrial efficiency. Almost overnight these new factories gave the metropolitan peripheries and decentralized sunbelt cities a substantial industrial base on which they could build during the postwar period.

- *Highway Construction.* From the beginning, highways were regarded as a public responsibility, entitled to subsidies with tax dollars, while the rail system was not. Rail freight (and often mass transit as well) remained under the control of private corporations. After 1920, the owners were increasingly unable or unwilling to improve their services to attract customers. Highway engineers presided over one of the most massive construction efforts in history, culminating after 1958 in the 44,000 miles of the federal interstate highway system built at a cost of \$108 billion. While these Main Streets of the emerging new cities flourished, the rail lines that served the downtowns stagnated or declined.

- *Local Government.* After the turn of the century, city after city failed to annex its suburbs because of suburban resistance. As a result, cities lost the tax base of the most prosperous and rapidly expanding areas of the region. And since zoning in the American system is essentially a matter of local control, the power to regulate new development passed to the hundreds of suburban governments, which had little interest in restraining growth to create a balanced metropolitan region. Developers learned they could play one small local planning board off another, escaping all control. As the developer Sam Lefrak observed, "There

is no zoning: only deals."

Relieved of the task of delivering the full range of services required by a great city, suburbs could tailor public spending to the specific needs of their constituents. With surprising speed, suburban public school systems developed into formidable enterprises, soon rivaling and then surpassing the once-dominant big-city schools.

Without anybody intending for it to happen, all of these seemingly unrelated forces converged to generate enormous momentum behind the great tide of decentralization that washed over the American metropolis after 1945. The tide has continued relentlessly, through booms and recessions, under Democratic and Republican administrations, until the old industrial city became, if not an extinct species, at least a highly endangered one.

The first significant sign was a drop in population. Between 1950 and 1960, all of the large, established cities lost people. Boston, the worst case, shrank by 13 percent, while its suburbs gained 17 percent. New York and Chicago lost less than two percent each, but their suburbs gained over 70 percent. To these blows were added shrinkage of the industrial base. Between 1947 and 1967, the 16 largest and oldest central cities lost an average of 34,000 manufacturing jobs each, while their suburbs gained an average of 87,000. This trend continued through the 1970s, as the cities suffered the elimination of from 25 percent (Minneapolis) to 40 percent (Philadelphia) of the manufacturing jobs that remained.

Building on their growing base of population and jobs, suburban entrepreneurs during the 1950s and 1960s began transforming the new city into a self-sufficient world. "We don't go downtown anymore," became the new city's motto. Shopping centers displaced downtown department stores; small merchants

and repairmen deserted Main Street for stores "along the highway" or folded up shop under the competitive pressure of the growing national chain stores. Even cardiologists and corporate lawyers moved their offices closer to their customers.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the new city found itself at the top of a whole range of national and even international trends. The movement from snowbelt to sunbelt meant a shift toward urban areas that had been "born decentralized" and organized on new-city principles. The new city, moreover, moved quickly to dominance in the most rapidly expanding sections of the industrial economy—electronics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and aircraft—leaving the old city with such sunset industries as textiles, iron and steel, and automobiles.

Finally, during the 1970s, the new city successfully challenged the old downtowns in the last area of their supremacy, office employment. The "office park" became the locale of choice for many businesses, new and old. Jaded New Yorkers looked on in stunned disbelief as one major corporation after another pulled up stakes and departed for former commuter towns like Stamford, Connecticut, or more distant sunbelt locations. By the 1980s, even social scientists could not ignore the fact that the whole terminology of "suburb" and "central city," deriving from the era of the industrial metropolis, had become obsolete. As Mumford had predicted, the single center had lost its dominance.



But are the sprawling regions *cities*? Judged by the standards of the centralized metropolis, the answer is no. As I have sug-

gested, this "city" lacks any definable borders, a center or a periphery, or a clear distinction between residential, industrial, and commercial zones. Instead, shopping malls, research and production facilities, and corporate headquarters all seem scattered amid a chaos of subdivisions, apartment complexes, and condominiums. It is easy to understand why urban planners and social scientists trained in the clear functional logic of the centralized metropolis can see only disorder in these "nonplace urban fields," or why ordinary people use the word "sprawl" to describe their own neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, I believe that the new city has a characteristic structure—one that departs radically not only from the old metropolis but from all cities of the past.

To grasp this structure we must return to the prophetic insights of Frank Lloyd Wright. From the 1920s until his death in 1959, Wright was preoccupied with his plan for an ideal decentralized American city which he called Broadacres. Although many elements of the plan were openly utopian—he wished, for example, to ensure that every American would have access to at least an acre of land so that all could reap the economic and psychological benefits that he associated with part-time farming—Wright also had a remarkable insight into the highway-based world that was developing around him. Above all he understood the consequences of a city based on a grid of highways rather than the hub-and-spokes of the older city. Instead of a single privileged center, there would be a multitude of crossings, no one of which could assume priority. And the grid would be boundless by its very nature, capable of unlimited extension in all directions.

Such a grid, as it indeed developed, did not allow for the emergence of an "imperial" metropolis to monopolize the life of a region. For Wright, this meant that the fam-

ily home would be freed from its fealty to the city and allowed to emerge as the real center of American life. As he put it, "The true center, (the only centralization allowable) in Usonian democracy, is the individual Usonian house." (Usonia was Wright's name for the United States).

In the plans for Broadacres—a city he said would be "everywhere or nowhere"—Wright foresaw what I believe to be the essential element in the structure of the new city: a megalopolis based on *time* rather than space.

Even the largest of the old "big cities" had a firm identity in space. The big city had a center as its basic point of orientation—the Loop, Times Square—and also a boundary. Starting from the center, sooner or later one reached the edge of the city.

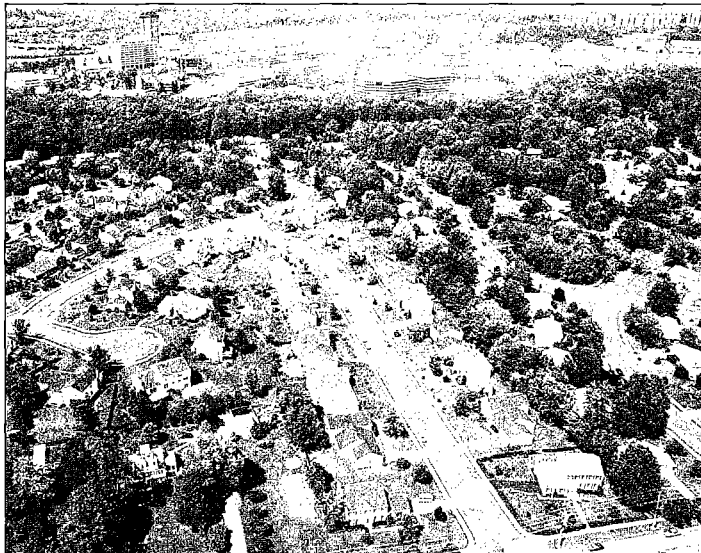
In the new city, however, there is no single center. Instead, as Wright suggested, each family home has become the central point for its members. Families create their

own "cities" out of the destinations they can reach (usually travelling by car) in a reasonable length of time. Indeed, distance in the new cities is generally measured in terms of time rather than blocks or miles. The supermarket is 10 minutes away. The nearest shopping mall is 30 minutes in another direction, and one's job 40 minutes away by yet another route. *The pattern formed by these destinations represents "the city" for that particular family or individual.* The more varied one's destinations, the richer and more diverse is one's personal "city." The new city is a city *à la carte*.

It can be seen as composed of three overlapping networks, representing the three basic categories of destinations that define each person's city. These are the household network; the network of consumption; and the network of production.

The household network is composed of places that are part of family and personal life. For a typical household of two parents and two children, this network is necessarily oriented around childrearing—and it keeps parents scurrying frantically in station wagons and minivans from one place to another. Its set of destinations include the homes of the children's playmates (which may be down the street or scattered around a county), the daycare center, the schools, a church or synagogue, community centers, and the homes of the parents' friends. Although this network is generally more localized than the other two, it is almost always wider than the traditional urban neighborhood.

The two-parent family with children is the arche-



"Don't Fairfax Loudon!" says a bumper-sticker in suburban Loudon County, Virginia. Fairfax County is the home of Tysons Corner (above), a prime example of the new city gone awry.

typical new-city household, but, especially since 1970, the new city has made a place for others. For single or divorced people, single parents, young childless couples or older "empty nest" couples, widows and widowers, the new city offers a measure of familiarity and security that many find lacking in the central city. Its housing is increasingly diverse. No longer confined to single-family homes, it now includes apartment towers, town homes and condominiums, and various kinds of retirement housing, from golf-oriented communities to nursing homes. There are more places to socialize. The same mall that caters essentially to families on weekends and evenings may also serve as an informal community center for older people in the morning, while its bars and restaurants play host to a lively singles scene after the stores close.

The network of consumption—Mallopolis, in economist James Millar's phrase—comprises essentially the shopping centers and malls which, as Wright predicted, have located themselves at the strategic crossroads of the highway system. It also includes movie theaters, restaurants, health clubs, playing fields and other recreational facilities, and perhaps a second home 30 to 100 miles away.

Although this network serves much the same function as the old downtown, it is scattered, and each consumer is free to work out his particular set of preferences from the vast menu of offerings presented by Mallopolis.

Finally, there is the network of production. It includes the place of employment of one or both spouses. It also includes the suppliers—from computer-chip manufacturers to janitorial services—which these enterprises rely upon. Information comes instantaneously from around the world while raw materials, spare parts, and other necessities are trucked in from the firms that cluster along nearby highways.

This network minimizes the traditional distinction between the white-collar world of administration and the blue-collar world of production. Both functions co-exist in virtually every "executive office park." Its most successful enterprises are those where research and development and specialized techniques of production are intimately intertwined: pharmaceuticals, for example, or electronics. Conversely, its most routinized labor can be found in the so-called "back-offices," data-processing centers that perform tasks once done at a downtown corporate headquarters.

Each of these networks has its own spatial logic. For example, primary schools are distributed around the region in response to the school-age population; shopping malls reflect population density, wealth, and the road system; large firms locate where their workers and their suppliers can easily reach them. But because the networks overlap, the pattern on the ground is one of juxtaposition and interpenetration. Instead of the logical division of functions of the old metropolis, one finds a post-modern, post-urban collage.

In some places, a particularly active locale like Tysons Corner, in Fairfax County, Virginia, may draw together elements from different networks—shopping malls and offices—to form an approximation of an old downtown. But the logic of the new city generally confounds that kind of concentration. Such areas immediately become points of especially bad traffic congestion, denying the ready access that is a hallmark of the new city. (It may be poetic justice that the leaders of the American Automobile Association, patron saint of the suburban motorist, have become so frustrated by the bumper-to-bumper traffic in the area around Tysons Corner that they have decided to move AAA headquarters to the relatively open roads of Orlando, Florida.) Tysons Corner is an exception. In general,

FURTHER DISPATCHES FROM THE NEW CITY

Detroit, Mich.—The distinction between “city” and “suburb” makes no sense here. Actually, Detroit is more like Los Angeles than New York: It’s a city stuck in a Cuisinart, then poured out, into a big shallow pan. You’ll find people living, working, shopping all over the place. The Old City just doesn’t have the concentration of functions that make it the undisputed centerpiece.

Indeed, like Los Angeles but for different reasons, Detroit has evolved several separate “centers.” Not downtowns exactly, but these concentrations of jobs and people now rival the old riverside “downtown.” While [Mayor Coleman] Young’s people scramble for political construction handouts, or pay off developers in concessions to build on their turf, Southfield and Troy-Birmingham enjoy a boom of privately financed building.

—*The Detroit News* (August 5, 1987)

Some companies [in suburban office parks] have tried to compensate for the isolation by using consultants more One executive summed it up in a word. What, I asked him, gesturing to the empty visitor’s parking lot, did they do about visitors? “We hire them,” he said.

—*City: Rediscovering the Center* (1989)
by William H. Whyte

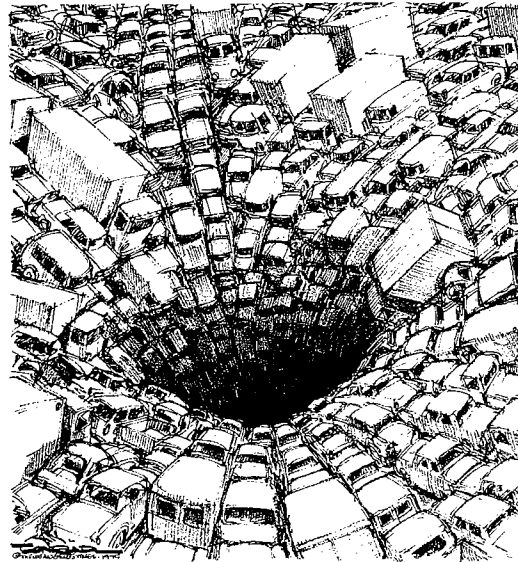
Schaumburg, Ill.—It’s a cliché heard time and again in the suburban zoning . . . battles and cries for the preservation of open space: “We don’t want to be another Schaumburg!”

[I]t’s jealousy, pure jealousy, responds Thomas C. Koenig, director of planning for the Village of Schaumburg. “Most communities wish they had our problems.”

By “problems” he means 45,000 local jobs, a population that has grown to 64,000 from 130 in 32 years, no municipal property tax levies, a top-notch police department, its own cultural center and many more amenities.

—*The Chicago Tribune* (July 26, 1988)

Pick your metropolitan area, from Boston to Hartford to New York to Washington, and now across the South and Midwest and in California, and you run into some severe labor shortages. The same alarming mismatch appears: Low-skill, entry-level jobs go begging in the suburbs, while in center cities jobless rates remain alarmingly high—up to 30 percent or worse for black teenagers



CALIFORNIA SYNDROME

Some employers’ solution is to carry inner-city workers out to suburban work sites—by public or private transportation—as work locations crop up farther from mass-transit lines. McDonald’s, in suburban Westchester County, New York and Connecticut, buses in workers from the Bronx. Vans go out 26 miles to Dulles Airport from depressed Washington neighborhoods

The special vans—derisively labeled “slave vans”—can serve some workers, some places. But they mask gut problems How many people will be anxious to forsake welfare for \$4- or \$5-an-hour jobs with long commutes and high bus fares?

— *The Los Angeles Times* (Aug. 14, 1988)

Miami, Fl.—Miami’s miserable experience with Metrorail—also called “Metrofail” and “the train to nowhere”—could spell the end of any major new fixed-rail transit systems. Daily ridership at last count was about 36,000, less than 20 percent of the projected 202,000. Not only does Miami’s system spring from the old hub-and-spokes mentality but it calls on many riders to use two or three modes of transit to reach their destination Says University of Miami Prof. Ira Sheskin: “I figured out pretty quickly I could drive my car in half the time and I could park at a meter for 5 hours for about \$2.”

—*U.S. News & World Report* (Sept. 7, 1987)

the new city allows and requires each citizen to make connections among the three networks—to make a city—on his own. The new city has no center or boundary because it does not need them.

Women have been a not-so-hidden force behind the new city's economic success. Since 1957, the proportion of married women aged 27 to 54 with jobs has grown from 33 percent to 68 percent. More than half of all women with children aged three years or younger are now employed outside the home. Much of the economic life of the new city, especially with its concentration on retail trade and back-office data processing, would be impossible without these new workers. Indeed, the presence of employment opportunities so close to home—convenient, with decent pay and flexible schedules—is surely responsible for part of the remarkable influx of married women into the work force (although the plentiful supply of workers could just as easily be said to have attracted employers). The outcome is more than a little ironic, considering the fact that the bedroom suburb had originally been designed to separate women from the corruptions of the world of work.

The new city thus decisively breaks with the older suburban pattern that restricted married middle-class women with children to a life of neighborhood-oriented domesticity. Women still work closer to home than men do, and they still bear most of the responsibility for childcare and housekeeping, but, in contrast to the old metropolis, the economic and spatial structure of the new city tends to equalize gender roles.

Indeed, one can argue that the new city has largely been built on the earnings of two-income families and thus reflects their needs more closely than did either the urban core or the traditional bedroom suburb. One large housing developer, Scarbor-

ough Corporation of Marlton, New Jersey, found that 72 percent of its customers during the mid-1980s were two-income couples, compared to less than 30 percent a decade earlier. Accordingly, the firm redesigned some of its houses, substituting a "study-office" for the "sewing room," scaling down the formal living room and enlarging the family room, providing more pantry space to cut down on trips to the supermarket, and selecting building materials to minimize maintenance.

In other ways, both trivial and important, the new city has responded to the changing character of families with more flexibility than critics of "the suburbs" are willing to admit. Encouraged by women's groups and planning boards, some developers have set aside space for day-care centers in new office complexes. There are extended school days for "latch-key" children and, during the summer, recreation programs. And only in the new city can one find the extensive array of Pizza Huts, Sizzler's, Denny's, and other inexpensive "family-style" restaurants which, though they may not delight Julia Child, are many a parent's salvation at the end of a hard day at the office.



When Frank Lloyd Wright envisioned Broadacre City, he failed to consider the role of the old centralized industrial cities in the new world of the future. He simply assumed that the old cities would disappear once the conditions that had created them were gone. The reality has not been so simple. Just as the industrial metropolis grew up around the older mercantile city, so the new city of our time has surrounded the

old metropolis. What was once the sole center is now one point of concentration among many.

In general, the skyscraper cores of the central cities have adapted to this change and prospered. Even a decentralized region needs a "headquarters," a place of high status and high rents where the movers-and-shakers can rub shoulders and meet for power lunches. By contrast, the old factory zones have not found a function in the new environment. As a result, the central city has reverted to what it was before industrialization: a site for high-level administration and luxury consumption, where some of the wealthiest members of society live in close proximity to many of the poorest.

The recent boom in downtown office construction should not conceal the fact that downtown prosperity rests on a much narrower base than it did in its heyday during the 1920s. Most of the retail trade has fled to the malls; the grand old movie palaces and many of the nightspots are gone. Only the expansion of corporate headquarters, law firms, banks and investment houses, advertising agencies, and other corporate and governmental services has kept the downtown towers filled, and even in these fields there have been major leakages of back-office employment to the new city. Nevertheless, this employment base has enabled most core areas to retain an array of specialized shops, restaurants, and cultural activities unequalled in their region. This in turn encourages both the gentrification of surrounding residential neighborhoods and the "renaissance" of the core as a tourist and convention center.

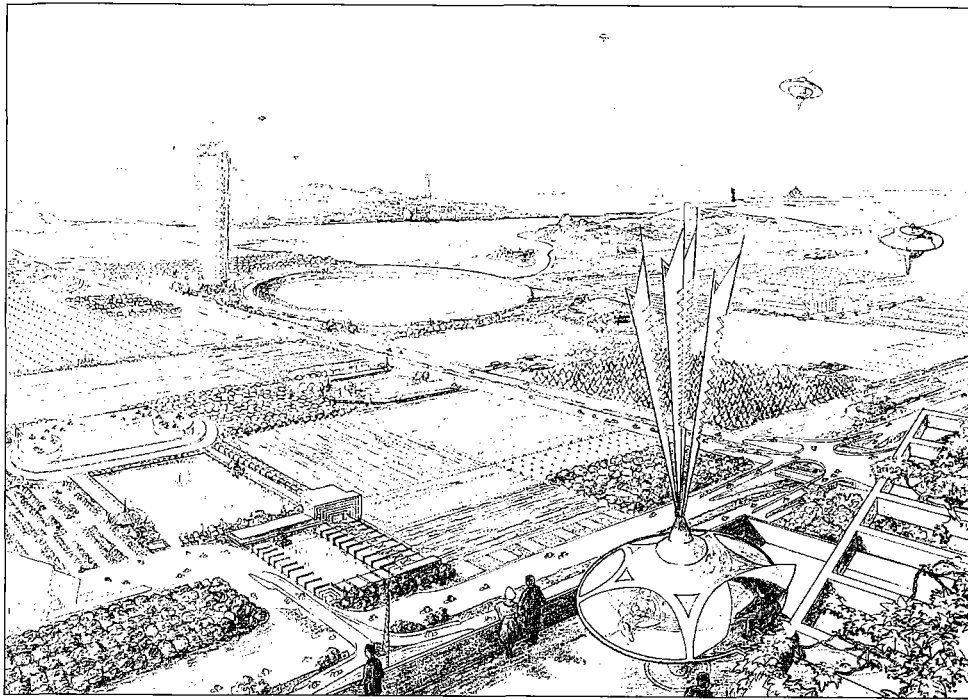
Yet only blocks away from a thriving core like Baltimore's Inner Harbor one can usually find extensive poverty, decay, de-industrialization, and abandonment that stretches out to encompass the old factory zone. The factory zones have found no new role. Their working-class populations have

largely followed the factories to the new city, leaving a supply of cheap, old housing which has attracted poor black, Hispanic, and other minority migrants with no other place to go. If the industrial city in its prime brought people together with jobs, cheap housing in the inner city now lures the jobless to those areas where employment prospects are dimmest. The old factory zone is thus doubly disadvantaged: The jobless have moved in, the jobs out.

Public transportation retains its traditional focus on the core, but the inner-city population generally lacks the education to compete for the high-level jobs that are available there. By contrast, the new city usually has an abundance of entry-level jobs, many of them already going begging as the supply of women and students seeking jobs diminishes. Unfortunately, residents of the new city have generally resisted attempts to build low-income housing in middle-class areas and have discouraged public transportation links. They want to keep the new city's expanding tax base for themselves and to avoid any direct fiscal responsibility for the urban poor. The new city has thus walled itself off from the problems of the inner city in a way that the Social Darwinists of the 19th century could only envy.

If the majority of Americans have voted with their feet (or rather, with their cars) for the new city, we need not conclude that this new environment has been successful, whether judged by the standards of previous cities or even on its own terms.

Comparing the new city with the old metropolis, we can see that the new city has yet to evolve anything comparable to the balance of community and diversity that the metropolis achieved. The urban neighborhood at its best gave a sense of rooted identity that the dispersed "household network" of the new city lacks. The



*A sketch from Frank Lloyd Wright's plan for Broadacre City. A roadside market and cultural center are in the foreground, with the county seat in the tower beyond. Wright's skills as a writer were inversely related to his genius as an architect and planner, as this excerpt from *The Living City* (1958) suggests: "Imagine man-units so arranged and integrated that every citizen may choose any form of production, distribution, self-improvement, enjoyment, within the radius of, say, 10 to 40 minutes of his own home—all now available to him by means of private car or plane, helicopter or some other form of fast public conveyance"*

"When every man, woman, and child may be born to put his feet on his own acres and every unborn child finds his acre waiting for him when he is born—then democracy will have been realized. By way of education made organic, life organic and organic architecture become the greatest servants of modern man. Great architects will surely then develop creative buildings not only in harmony with greenery and ground but in intimate patterns of the personal lives of individual owners."

downtowns provided a counterpoint of diversity, a neon-lit world where high and low culture met, all just a streetcar ride away. By comparison, even the most elaborate mall pales.

Of course, many residents of the new city were attracted there precisely because they were uncomfortable with both the community and diversity of the old. They wanted to escape from the neighborhood to a "community of limited liability," and

they found the cultural and social mix of downtown more threatening than exciting. The new city represents the sum of these choices, but we should beware of accepting the architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable's snooty judgment of the new city as "slurb" embodying " cliché conformity as far as the eye can see." The new city is rapidly becoming more diverse than the stereotypical suburb of old.

Beyond the inevitable distinctions be-

tween more and less affluent residential districts, the new city has begun to generate "communities of shared concerns" formed around areas of special historic, architectural, or environmental value. A neglected town bypassed by the malls and highways attracts homebuyers who want to restore the old houses and merchants who seek to revive its Main Street. An isolated area near a state park attracts those who are willing to sacrifice convenience for access to an unspoiled landscape.

Inevitably, the central city will continue to shelter the dominant institutions of high culture—museums, concert halls, and theaters—but in our electronic age these institutions no longer monopolize that culture. As the French novelist and cultural critic André Malraux wrote in his *Voices of Silence* (1950), there exists a "museum without walls"—a world of high-quality prints, photographs, art books, and other images which are available outside the museums or the galleries. In the age of the compact disc and the VCR, we have concert halls, opera houses, theaters, and movie palaces without walls. The new city is still a cultural satellite of the old, but the electronic decentralization of high culture and the growing vitality of the new city could soon give it an independent cultural base to rival past civilizations.

The most fervent self-criticism coming from the new city has not, however, focused on the lack of art galleries or symphony orchestras. It comes from those who fear that the very success of the new city is destroying the freedom of movement and access to nature that were its original attraction. As new malls and subdivisions eat up acre after acre of land, and as highways clog with traffic, the danger arises that the three networks of communication that comprise the city may break down. Too often the new city seems to be an environment as out of control as the old metropo-

lis. The machine of growth is yet again gaining the upper hand over any human purpose. The early residents of the new city worried little about regulating growth because there was still a seemingly endless supply of open land. Now that it is disappearing, the residents of the new city must finally face the consequences of get-and-grab development.

Once again we must turn for wisdom to the great prophets of decentralization, especially Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright believed that the guiding principle of the new city must be the harmonization of development with a respect for the land in the interest of creating a beautiful and civilized landscape. "Architecture and acreage will be seen together as landscape—as was the best antique architecture—and will become more essential to each other," he wrote. As his Broadacre City plans and drawings show, he largely ruled out large buildings or even high-rise structures. His plans show the same juxtapositions of housing, shopping, and industry that exist in the new city today. But they depict a world in which these are integrated into open space through the preservation of farmland, the creation of parks, and the extensive use of landscaping around buildings.

For Wright, an "organic" landscape meant more than creating beautiful vistas. It was the social effort to integrate the potentially disruptive effects of the machine in the service of a higher purpose. Wright, however, gave little practical thought to how this might be achieved. In one of his books he vaguely suggested that each county in Broadacres would have a "County Architect" with dictatorial powers to regulate the environment.

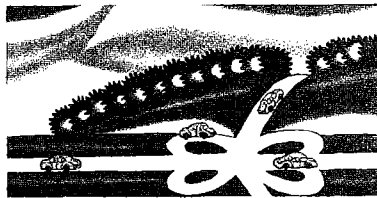
Lacking such a figure in reality, the new city must now undertake the difficult task of moving democratically from its virtually

unplanned pell-mell growth to planning with a concern for balanced growth. In New Jersey, a public opinion poll taken in connection with the proposed "State Development and Redevelopment Plan" shows that, by a margin of five to one, the residents of the highly-developed Garden State prefer less growth even at the cost of less economic development. Half agreed that controls on development should be "extremely strict," and 25 percent more said regulation should be "very strict."

The ever-present threat of a veto by the state legislature as the plan develops into final form (scheduled for late 1990) shows that these sentiments are still far from determining policy. The New Jersey Plan, however, includes certain proposals that will have to figure into any effective land-use control program in the new city. Limited areas of the state are designated as growth corridors, while development is discouraged in still-rural areas. Scenic or historic sites that give identity to a region are strictly earmarked for preservation. Whenever possible, building is to be channeled back into Newark, Paterson, and other depressed cities. In a creative adaptation of the urban concept of saving historic buildings by selling the air rights to build above

them, New Jersey's farmers are allowed to sell the "development rights" to their farms to entrepreneurs who can apply them as credits toward denser development in other areas where new construction is permitted. The farmers are thus allowed to tap the equity in their land without abandoning it to the bulldozer.

Preserving and enhancing the common landscape might become the issue on which the people of the new cities finally come together as communities. Not even Wright's County Architect could accomplish such a task unaided. It will be a slow effort of drafting regulations and making them stick; of patient upgrading of older construction to newer standards, and drawing together the privatized beauties of individual sites into a unified framework. Fifty years ago Lewis Mumford defined his ideal decentralized community as the "bio-technic city," the place where nature and the machine exist in harmony. He saw the coming age of decentralization as a great opportunity to embody the civilizing virtues of the great cities of the past in a new and democratic form. The last half century has not been kind to utopian expectations, but the promise of a new civilization in a new city need not be lost.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

AMERICA'S NEW CITY

America's big cities, Lewis Mumford declared in 1938, represent "a general miscarriage and defeat of civilized effort."

In **The Culture of Cities** (Greenwood, rev. ed. 1981), the polymath social philosopher and prophet of decentralization inaugurated a debate over the nature of cities that has continued to the present day. Mumford was no partisan of the suburb—like virtually all intellectuals, he was appalled by it. His ideal was the medieval city, which he argued had been unjustly maligned.

Our images of plague-ridden city dwellers clad in filthy rags come from a later era, Mumford argued. He insisted that life in the medieval city was generally healthy and fulfilling, rich in architectural beauty and civic life. Most important to him was the openness to nature that the cities' "clustered" housing made possible. "Gardens and orchards, sometimes fields and pastures, existed within the city," he wrote, as if scenting the moist earth from the far remove of his own New York apartment.

But Mumford held that the medieval city was perverted during the 15th century by the centralization of political power and the invention of the cannon. The need for massive fortifications made it too costly to found new cities, forcing the residents of old ones to live in ever more crowded and unpleasant circumstances. The forces of politics and "technics" were thus unleashed, a dynamic which Mumford traced in *Culture* and in his later, more comprehensive work, **The City in History** (Harcourt, 1961). City and suburb, he argued, would culminate in what he referred to as Megalopolis, Tyrannopolis, and Nekropolis.

Like others before him, notably the English city planner Ebenezer Howard, Mumford advocated a radical reorganization of the landscape—the creation of innumerable small "garden cities" of 30,000 souls or so, modeled on the medieval city. No mere dreamer, he managed, along with like-minded planners in the Regional Planning Association of America, to secure private financing during the 1920s to build just such a city in Radburn, New Jersey. As Daniel Schaffer notes with regret in **Garden**

Cities for America: The Radburn Experience (Temple Univ., 1982), the Great Depression struck before Radburn could be completed. Today, that fragment of Mumford's vision is a unique island "surrounded by the endless expanse of northern New Jersey's suburbs."

During the Depression, many veterans of the Radburn effort wound up in the New Deal's Resettlement Administration. There, as Paul Conklin writes in **Tomorrow A New World: The New Deal Community Program** (Da Capo, rev. ed. 1976), they planned to build 50 "greenbelt" towns at various sites around the country. But the plan foundered on Congressional opposition to the "socialistic" scheme. Only three new towns were built: Greenbelt, Md.; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wis. Like Radburn, they have since been swallowed up by encroaching suburbs. Yet Mumford's ideas were later put into practice in places like Irvine, California, and are routinely incorporated in many less ambitious housing projects being built today throughout the country.

Mumford's influence was felt in less benign ways as well, according to Jane Jacobs. In **The Death and Life of Great American Cities** (Random, 1961), she rather unfairly lumped Mumford together with the Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier and other modernist urban planners, and blamed them for inspiring the disastrous urban renewal efforts of the late 1940s and '50s. The Decentrists, as she called them, were anti-city. (The garden cities they advocated, Jacobs sneered, were "really very nice towns if you were docile and had no plans of your own.") Yet, Jacobs lamented, their ideas became orthodoxy, not only among planners and architects but also in Congress, state legislatures, city halls, and in the banks and government agencies that provide most of the nation's mortgage dollars.

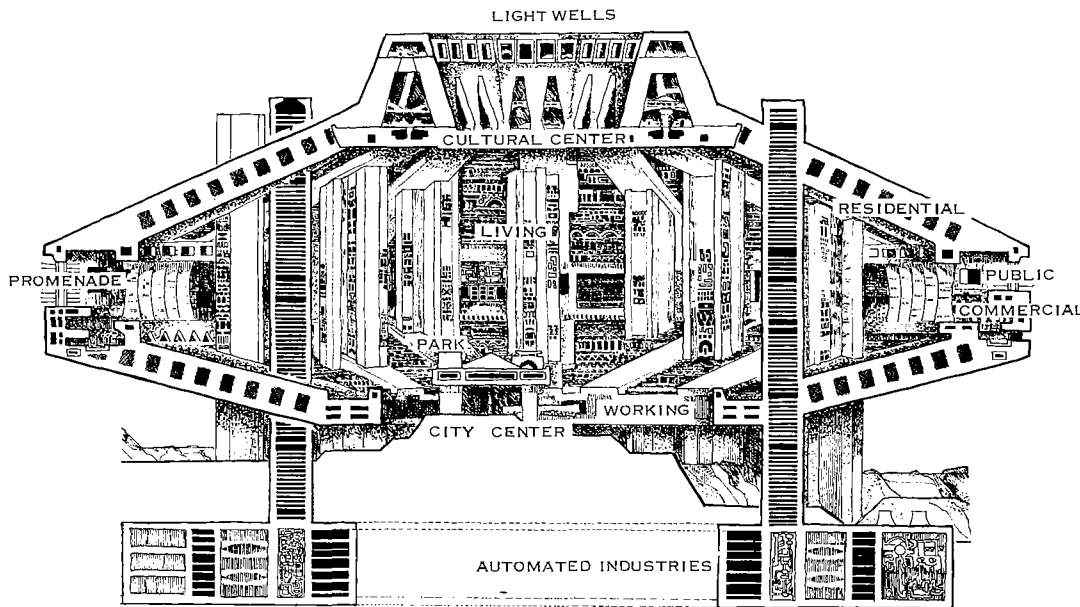
Adapted to the realities of the nation's existing cities, Jacobs argued, the Decentrists's anti-urban principles led to the replacement of poor but lively urban neighborhoods with monolithic apartment tower projects designed to keep the home separate from the hectic city streets. Jacobs, a passionate advocate of city

life, said that was all wrong. She proceeded to dissect in fascinating detail the characteristics of successful urban neighborhoods. She favored more of everything that she accused the Decentrists of disliking: more density, more activity, more intensity.

Only in America (and possibly Britain) would she get much argument. As Kenneth T. Jackson of Columbia University notes in **Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of America** (Oxford Univ., 1985), Europeans (and others) are astonished by the American preference for suburban life. In some European cities, suburbs simply do not exist, thanks in part

ferry and horse-drawn omnibus, each with its own characteristic pattern of residential settlement. The railroad created exclusive suburbs (along Philadelphia's Main Line, for example), the trolley fostered leafy middle-class suburbs, and the streetcar mostly served working-class neighborhoods close to the city center.

The trolley system in particular was vast and inexpensive, recalls Harvard historian of landscape architecture John Stilgoe in his wistful, evocative **Metropolitan Corridor** (Yale Univ., 1983). In 1904, newlyweds Clinton and Louisa Lucas, seized with "trolley mania," managed to make their 500-mile honeymoon trip from Del-



A city of the future by Paolo Soleri (1969).

to forceful government planning. "The outer boundaries of Copenhagen, Moscow, Cologne, and Vienna abruptly terminate with apartment buildings, and a 20-minute train ride will take one well into the countryside," says Jackson. In the sprawling "megacities" of Latin America and Africa, the outlying areas frequently lack running water, sewers, and police and fire protection.

As Jackson observes, there was nothing inevitable about the American pattern of suburban development. Over the years, suburban growth has been built around several different forms of transportation, beginning with the

aware to Maine almost exclusively by trolley, with a bagful of nickels and only a few brief interludes of railroad travel. Sam Bass Warner's **Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston** (Harvard Univ., 1969) remains the classic work on the effects of that form of transportation.

By the 1920s, however, the romance was over. "Most people," Jackson writes, "agreed with New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia that the automobile represented the best of modern civilization while the trolley was simply an old-fashioned obstacle to progress." Who could have guessed that Americans would so quickly

use their new Fords and Chevies to follow "progress" to the suburbs?

Why this American romance with the suburb? The usual answer is our legacy of Jeffersonian anti-urban sentiment. But in **Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia** (Basic, 1987), Robert Fishman traces its origins to British ideas about home and family. He says that the three Americans most responsible for popularizing the suburban ideal during the mid-19th century—writer Catherine Beecher and architects Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux—were deeply influenced by such English Evangelicals as William Wilberforce (1759–1833). The Evangelicals, writes Fishman, laid the foundation of Victorianism and, not coincidentally, also founded the prototypical suburb in Clapham, south of London. The suburb was meant to remove the nuclear family from urban vices—crime, taverns, dance halls, the petty corruptions of the workaday world—and to provide a haven where women, the "faithful repositories of the religious principle," as Wilberforce wrote, could tend to the moral and spiritual well-being of their children and husbands. Clapham and other towns like it became the model for the first American suburbs, such as New Jersey's Llewellyn Park (1857).

But for nearly a century, the suburb was as distant from the average American's experience as Palm Springs or Martha's Vineyard are today. The great geographical contest for people and preeminence was between city and country, a clash played out through populism at the ballot box and in the cultural politics of books such as Sherwood Anderson's portrait of small town grotesques, **Winesburg, Ohio** (1919). Not until 1920 did the U.S. Census Bureau certify the city's victory in the battle for bodies, if not souls.

It was not long before the suburb replaced the countryside as the city's prime competitor. No sooner had the first moving vans from the Bronx arrived in Levittown, it seemed, than urban intellectuals began publishing furious indictments of the alleged sterility of life in the subdivisions. Among them were David Riesman's **The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American** (1950) and William H.

Whyte's **The Organization Man** (1956). Exceeding all others in vitriol, Betty Friedan's **The Feminine Mystique** (1963), assailed the "domestic ideology" propagated by Wilberforce and his intellectual successors.

Still the exodus to suburbia continued. As Carl Abbot of Old Dominion University observes in his survey of **The New Urban America: Metropolitan Growth and Politics in Sunbelt Cities** (Univ. of N.C., rev. ed. 1987), the big city's demographic reign over American life lasted a brief half century. In 1970, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that suburbanites accounted for 37 percent of the U.S. population, city dwellers only 31 percent.

Beginning with Kevin Phillips's premature celebration of **The Emerging Republican Majority** (Anchor, 1970), political analysts have generally pronounced the population shift to the suburbs and the decentralized cities of the Sunbelt a conservative trend, though few have shared Phillips's satisfaction with it. Dissent of another kind was heard from neoconservative writer and editor Irving Kristol, who argued in **On the Democratic Idea in America** (Harper, 1972) that television and mass higher education were transforming all of America into an "urban civilization." The nation could do without the philistinism of provincial America, he said, but he worried about how it would fare without the ballast of the heartland's agrarian notions of piety and virtue.

Another line of argument concerns the fate of the poor in America's new geographic dispensation. Thus William Julius Wilson, a University of Chicago sociologist, argues in **The Truly Disadvantaged** (Univ. of Chicago, 1987) that the shift of people and jobs to the new cities is partly responsible for the growing isolation of inner-city ghettos and the creation of an urban underclass.

All of these books, from Mumford's to Wilson's, remind the reader that where and how Americans choose to live are not just matters of economics or convenience. Each step—from countryside, to city, to suburb, to "new city"—has involved an argument over what values we as a nation hold dear, a redefinition of what we call "the American way of life."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Many of the titles in this essay were suggested by Robert Fishman.

Flights, fusions, and fire power...

An illustrated history of the men, the missions, and the spacecraft

THE SOVIET MANNED SPACE PROGRAM



"Provides unparalleled insight... Equally impressive are the excellent photos, charts and graphs."
—The Washington Times
\$24.95

"Interesting... well-researched" (*Air & Space*) account of Russia's program to develop a supersonic airliner— with catastrophic results.
\$24.95

"The most complete compilation of nuclear weapons information ever made available to the public... a political broadside to the secretiveness of America's nuclear policy."
—Texas Monthly
\$29.95

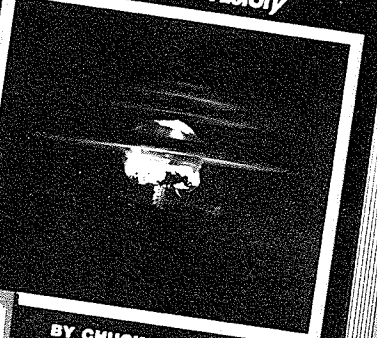
SOVIET SST

THE TECHNOLOGY POLITICS OF THE TUPOLEV-144

HOWARD MOON

US NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Secret History



BY CHUCK HANSEN

"An authentic addition to the literature of the common soldier... Chisholm sounds like the youthful private in *The Red Badge of Courage*."
—The New York Times
\$18.95

The Civil War Notebook of Daniel Chisholm



A Chronicle of Daily Life in the Union Army 1864-1865

Edited by W. Springer Meigs and J. August Shimrak

Now at your bookstore, or use coupon to order. Or call 1-800-733-3000, Dept. 010-01-137 (ISBN: 0-517-56954X, *The Soviet Manned Space Program*; 0-517-56601X, *Soviet SST*; 0-517-567407, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons*; 0-517-571609, *The Civil War Handbook of Daniel Chisholm*). AmEx, MasterCard, VISA accepted.

CROWN PUBLISHERS, INC.
DEPT. 010-01-137
225 Park Ave. So., NY, NY 10003, ATTN: Carl Apollonio
Please send me the book(s) indicated below. I enclose my check or money order for \$_____ including \$1.50 for postage and handling for the first book, \$.50 for each additional book.
10-day money-back guarantee.

Or charge my AmEx MasterCard VISA

THE SOVIET MANNED SPACE PROGRAM, \$24.95 (0-517-56954X)
 SOVIET SST, \$24.95 (0-517-56601X)
 U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPONS, \$29.95 (0-517-567407)
 THE CIVIL WAR NOTEBOOK OF DANIEL CHISHOLM, \$18.95 (0-517-571609)

_____ Exp. Date _____
 Signature _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

ORION BOOKS

A member of The Crown Publishing Group

010-01-137